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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/685,761	10/15/2003	Thomas W. Davison	1291.1121109	6309
28075	7590	11/21/2007	EXAMINER	
CROMPTON, SEAGER & TUFTE, LLC			NGUYEN, VI X	
1221 NICOLLET AVENUE			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
SUITE 800			3734	
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55403-2420			MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
			11/21/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/685,761	DAVISON ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Victor X. Nguyen	3734

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 September 2007.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 71-78 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 78 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 71-77 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 9/18/07;10/11/07.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. Newly submitted claim 78 directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention originally claimed for the following reasons: Applicant's election **without traverse** of Group 1 (apparatus) in 3/19/2007. Since applicant has received an action on the merits for the originally presented invention, this invention has been constructively elected by original presentation for prosecution on the merits. Accordingly, claim 78 (method) is withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention. See 37 CFR 1.142(b) and MPEP § 821.03.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 71-77 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification (*submitted on 10/15/2003*) in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. **In claim 71**, the disclosure does not describe “*the retractor having sufficient rigidity to retract tissue; and an expander having first and second portions that engage the retractor to move the retractor from the unexpanded to the expanded configuration.*” **In claim 37**, the disclosure does not describe “*the distal end of the retractor completely surrounds an access path that provides access to the surgical site*”. **In claim 76**, the disclosure does not describe “*the retractor is formed from a single piece of metal interconnected through a guide and a slot*

formed in the distal end". In claim 77, there is no disclosure of the "*expander engages the distal end of the retractor*".

Drawings

3. The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. None of the drawings of Applicant(amendment dated 9/18/2007) illustrates *a reference number for a retractor*.

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 71-77 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Bufalini

(5,707,359). Bufalini discloses in fig. 2 a surgical instrument is capable of allowing the insertion of different size instruments from the body cavity (see col. 1, lines 25-27) including: element 10 is considered as a retractor since it is capable for holding open the edges of the patient's body, where a proximal end of the retractor has an access opening (the access opening occurs to the right side of segment 34), where the retractor has sufficient rigidity to retract tissue (see col. 4, lines 35-38), where an expander at 30 engages with the retractor to move the retractor from the unexpanded configuration (fig. 1) to the expanded configuration (fig. 2). Regarding the intended use “a surgical spinal access system *for receiving spinal instrument*, the retractor *configured for an unexpanded configuration completely surrounding an access path during insertion into the incision, and an expanded configuration* when located a surgical site in the patient, the retractor when in the expanded configuration *configured to expand to expand to provide maximum exposure to a surgical site at the distal end*” The statement of intended use and other functional statements have been carefully considered but are deemed not to impose any structure limitations on the claims distinguishable over Bufalini reference which is capable of being used as claimed if one desires to do so. As to claims 72-75, it is noted that fig. 2 of Bufalini clearly defined the distal end 36 in the expanded configuration has a first dimension greater than a second dimension, where the distal end has a cross sectional area greater than a cross sectional area at the access opening at the proximal end of the retractor, where the first portion of the retractor has

an access path with a constant diameter and the second portion being configured for movement from the unexpanded to the expanded configuration, and where the distal end of the retractor completely surrounds an access path that provides access to the surgical site (a functional limitation): Thus , a reference needs not show the structure of the recitation in order to meet the claim language but rather the reference needs only be capable of being used with such structure. Accordingly, the reference is considered to read on the claimed limitation of the claimed noted. As to claims 76-77, it is noted that fig. 4 of Bufalini the retractor is formed a single piece of metal interconnected through a guide at 50 and slot within the guide, and the expander at 30 engages the distal end of the retractor.

Response to Arguments

5. Applicant's remarks filed 9/18/2007 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Regarding to new claims 71-77, applicant is asked to please refer to the modified prior art rejections above where examiner addresses applicant's concerns regarding the new limitations.

Conclusion

6. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Victor X. Nguyen whose telephone number is (571) 272-4699. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (8-4.30 P.M).

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Michael Hayes can be reached on (571) 272-4697. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Victor X Nguyen
Examiner
Art Unit 3734



VN VN
11/14/2007



MICHAEL J. HAYES
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER